

APPLICATION
FOR
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

TITLE: SPEED SENSITIVE CONTENT DELIVERY IN A CLIENT-SERVER NETWORK

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY EXPRESS MAIL

Express Mail Label No. EV399312035US

May 5, 2004
Date of Deposit

SPEED SENSITIVE CONTENT DELIVERY IN A CLIENT-SERVER NETWORK

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation (and claims the benefit of priority under 35 USC 120) of U.S. application serial no. 09/675,818, filed September 28, 2000. The disclosure of the prior application is considered part of (and is incorporated by reference in) the disclosure of this application.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to measured data flow, and more particularly to connecting a client to a particular destination based on the connection speed of the client.

BACKGROUND

To provide greater access to the Internet, the communication protocols and languages utilized by the clients and servers have become standardized. These protocols include the Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP), which is the communication protocol used for communications between clients and servers, and the Transfer Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). The TCP portion is the transport-specific protocol for communication between computers or applications. IP is a lower-level protocol than TCP and facilitates the

transmission of data packets between remotely-located machines. TCP is a transport-level protocol that operates on top of IP. TCP provides a full-duplex byte stream between applications, whether they reside on the same machine or on remotely-located machines. TCP ensures that transmitted data packets are received in the same order in which they were transmitted.

Remote terminals or computers may connect to the Internet via an Internet Service Provider (ISP) using a variety of connection methods and speeds. These may include, among other things, a dial-up modem at 28.8 kilobits per second (Kbps), dial-up at 56 Kbps, an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) line, a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), a cable modem, or a T1 line. Although each of these methods allow for connection to the Internet, each method does so at differing speeds. For example, a typical dial-up modem connects to the Internet at 56 Kbps while a T1 line may connect at 1.544 million bits per seconds (Mbps). The increased bandwidth of the higher speed connections allows more information to be downloaded in a shorter period of time.

Web designers are taking advantage of the proliferation of high bandwidth connections to the Internet by creating more content rich websites. This allows more information, multimedia, and features to be provided to the

users. However, for users that are connecting to the Internet using a slower speed connection, these high-content websites take an exceedingly long period of time to load. Many users allow a limited period of time for a website to download. If
5 a website is not fully downloaded within this limited time period, the user typically logs off the Internet or proceeds to another website. Thus, web-designers are forced to decide between providing content rich sites for the high-bandwidth connections and losing the low-bandwidth connections or
10 decreasing the amount of information provided to everyone.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages of the invention will become more apparent upon reading the following detailed description and upon reference to the accompanying
15 drawings.

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a network server connection using a client interface device according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 illustrates a destination address including
20 a plurality of sub-addresses optimized for specific connection speeds according to an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 3 is a diagram of the exchange between the client, the client interface device, and the server according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 4 is a flow chart of the process used by the client interface device to optimize the connection between the client and the server according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a network server connection 100 using a client interface device 110 according to an embodiment of the present invention. A client 105 communicates with the client interface device 110. The client 105 may be a remote computer connected to a network such as a local area network, a wide area network, the Internet, or the like. For purposes of illustration, the invention will be described herein with a connection to the Internet. The client interface device 110 communicates with the server 115. The client interface device 110 relays information from the client 105 to the server 115 in both directions. The client interface device 110 may also directly connect the client 105 to the server 115.

Figure 2 illustrates a destination group 200 including a destination address 205 and a plurality of sub-

addresses 210-225 optimized for specific connection speeds.

Web designers are continually placing more and more information on a web page. This allows the web designers to increase the amount of information delivered to the client, and also allows
5 for the creation of a more entertaining website using streaming video, music, and large graphic files. Those clients 105 connecting to the server 115 with a high bandwidth connection can enjoy the full features of the website.

The destination address 205 may be designed for
10 optimal viewing by a client 105 connecting to the server 115 using a connection having 1.5 Mbps or higher. With this connection speed, the client 105 is able to view all of the content of the destination address 205 without undue delays caused by downloading. However, if a slower speed client 105
15 attempted to connect to the high bandwidth designed destination address 205, the client 105 would require a large amount of time to load the contents of the page. This would result in longer delays and a reduction in the quality of service provided the client 105. Therefore, web designers may create
20 sub-addresses which are designed for slower speed connections. A first sub-address 210 may be designed for clients connecting at 28.8 Kbps, a second sub-address 215 may be designed for clients connecting at 56.6 Kbps, a third sub-address 220 may be designed for clients connecting at 128 Kbps, and a fourth sub-

address 225 may be designed for clients connecting at 512 Kbps. Of course, the number of sub-addresses may vary site to site. Each of the sub-addresses 210-225 includes a reduced amount of content to allow the site to load within an acceptable period
5 of time under the designated connection speed. To achieve this, the sub-addresses 210-225 may remove some multimedia content, use reduced resolution, delete some content, or other techniques to reduce the bandwidth necessary. If the destination address 205 is a graphics file, the sub-address
10 210-225 may be the same graphics file at respectively lower resolutions. The location of the sub-addresses 210-225 may be provided to a client 105 or client interface device 110 attempted to access the destination address 205.

Figure 3 is a diagram of the exchange between the
15 client 105, the client interface device 110, and the server 115 according to one embodiment of the present invention. To initiate a connection to the server 115, the client 105 requests a connection by transmitting a SYN packet 305. Although the client 105 is sending the SYN packet to the
20 server 115, the SYN packet will be received by the client interface device 110. The client interface device 110 then responds to the client 105 with a SYN/ACK packet 310. The client interface device begins timing upon transmission of the SYN/ACK packet 310. After receiving the SYN/ACK packet 310,

the client 105 responds with an ACK 315 back to the client interface device 110. Once the ACK 315 is received, the client interface device 110 stops timing and calculates the elapsed time required for the communication to the client 105.

5 Based on this elapsed time, the client interface device 110 is able to determine a profile for the client 105. The profile may include the data flow rate. Several factors may affect the profile of the client 105, including the connection speed and network congestion.

10 Once the client 105 has successfully established a connection, the client 105 may issue a GET request 320 to the server 115. The GET request 320 may be requesting a website, a file, or other destination. Once received, the client interface device 110 acknowledges the GET request 320 with an
15 ACK 325 signal.

To complete the GET request 320, the client interface device 110 establishes a connection with the server 115. The client interface device 110 establishes the connection by transmitting a SYN packet 330 to the server 115.
20 The server 115 receives the SYN packet 330 and responds with a SYN/ACK packet 335. After receiving the SYN/ACK packet 335, the client interface device 110 responds with an ACK 340 back to the server 115.

Now that the connection to the server 115 is established, the client interface device 110 examines the GET request 320 and determine if the client 105 can successfully complete this request in the necessary time frame. The client interface device 110 uses the client profile to determine the timing requirements. The client interface device 110 then creates a GET request based of the GET request 320 of the client 105 and the calculated client profile. If the client 105 is able to handle the original GET request 320, the client interface device 110 will simply forward that as the GET request 345 which is sent to the server 115. However, if the client 105 cannot handle the original GET request 320, the client interface device will determine a revised GET request 345 based on the client profile. For example, the original GET request may be for the destination address 205, but the client 105 may only have a 128 Kbps profile. In this circumstance, the client interface device 110 will rewrite the request to send the client to the sub-address 220. Thus, the GET request 345 sent to the server 115 will be for the sub-address 220. When the server 115 receives the GET request 345, the server 115 sends an ACK 350 to acknowledge the request.

After the server 115 receives the GET request 345, normal TCP/IP and HTTP protocols facilitate client request

fulfillment. During this process, the client interface device 110 may create a more detailed profile of the client connection speed. Of course, the client interface device 110 may also directly connect the client 105 to the server 115.

5 Figure 4 is a flow chart of the process 400 used by the client interface device 110 to optimize the connection between the client 105 and the server 115 according to an embodiment of the present invention. The process 400 begins in START block 405. Proceeding to block 410, the client interface
10 device 110 determines the response time of the client 105. This allows the client interface device 110 to estimate a connection speed of the client 105.

 Proceeding to block 415, the client interface device 110 receives a resource request from the client 105. The
15 resource request may be for a website, a file, or other data to be transferred to the client 105. The process 400 then proceeds to block 420. In block 420, the client interface device 110 determines if the resource request can be fulfilled based on the measured response time of the client 105. If the
20 request can be fulfilled, the process 400 proceeds along the YES branch to block 425. In block 425, the resource request is transmitted to the server 115.

 Returning to block 420, if the resource request cannot be fulfilled, the process 400 proceeds along the NO

branch to block 430. In block 430, the client interface device rewrites the resource request to optimize the client loading based on the measured response time. For example, a client 105 may request a website "WEBSITE X" which is optimized for
 5 connection using 1.5 Mbps. However, the measured response time may indicate the client 105 has a connection time of 56 Kbps. In this case, the client interface device 110 may rewrite the request to "WEBSITE X56" which is the same website content optimized for 56 Kbps.

10 After the request or rewritten request is sent to the server 115, the process 400 proceeds to block 435. In block 435, the client interface device 110 connects the server 115 to the client 105. During the connection, the client interface device 110 may act as a conduit, continually measuring the
 15 client response time or may directly connect the server 115 to the client 105. The process 400 then terminates in END block 440.

Numerous variations and modifications of the invention will become readily apparent to those skilled in the
 20 art. Accordingly, the invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics.